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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

*Memorandum*

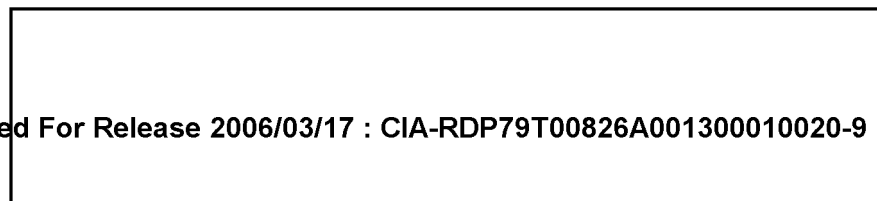


THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600  
4 October 1966

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
FURTHER DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION  
CONTAINED HEREIN IS **NOT** AUTHORIZED

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HIGHLIGHTS

Allied forces are pursuing Viet Cong in coastal Binh Dinh Province in an attempt to block their escape routes. In the civilian government, regional and personality difficulties in one of the cabinet ministries threaten cabinet unity.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:  
Allied forces trapped a battered Communist force in coastal Binh Dinh Province on 4 October while capturing a relatively high number of enemy soldiers in Operation IRVING (Paras. 1-2). A South Vietnamese gunboat, supporting infantry units engaged in Operation BATON ROUGE, was mined and sunk on the same day about 20 miles southeast of Saigon (Para. 3). Also on 4 October, Operation NORWALK, a two-battalion road-clearing operation, began along Route 13, north of Saigon (Para. 4). Viet Cong forces may attempt a major campaign in South Vietnam's IV Corps (Para. 5-7). Communist infiltration is continuing into Quang Tri Province (Paras. 8-12). Recently captured documents provide some insight into the mission of the 324th Division in Quang Tri Province (Paras. 13-15).

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III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:  
There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:  
There is nothing of significance to report.

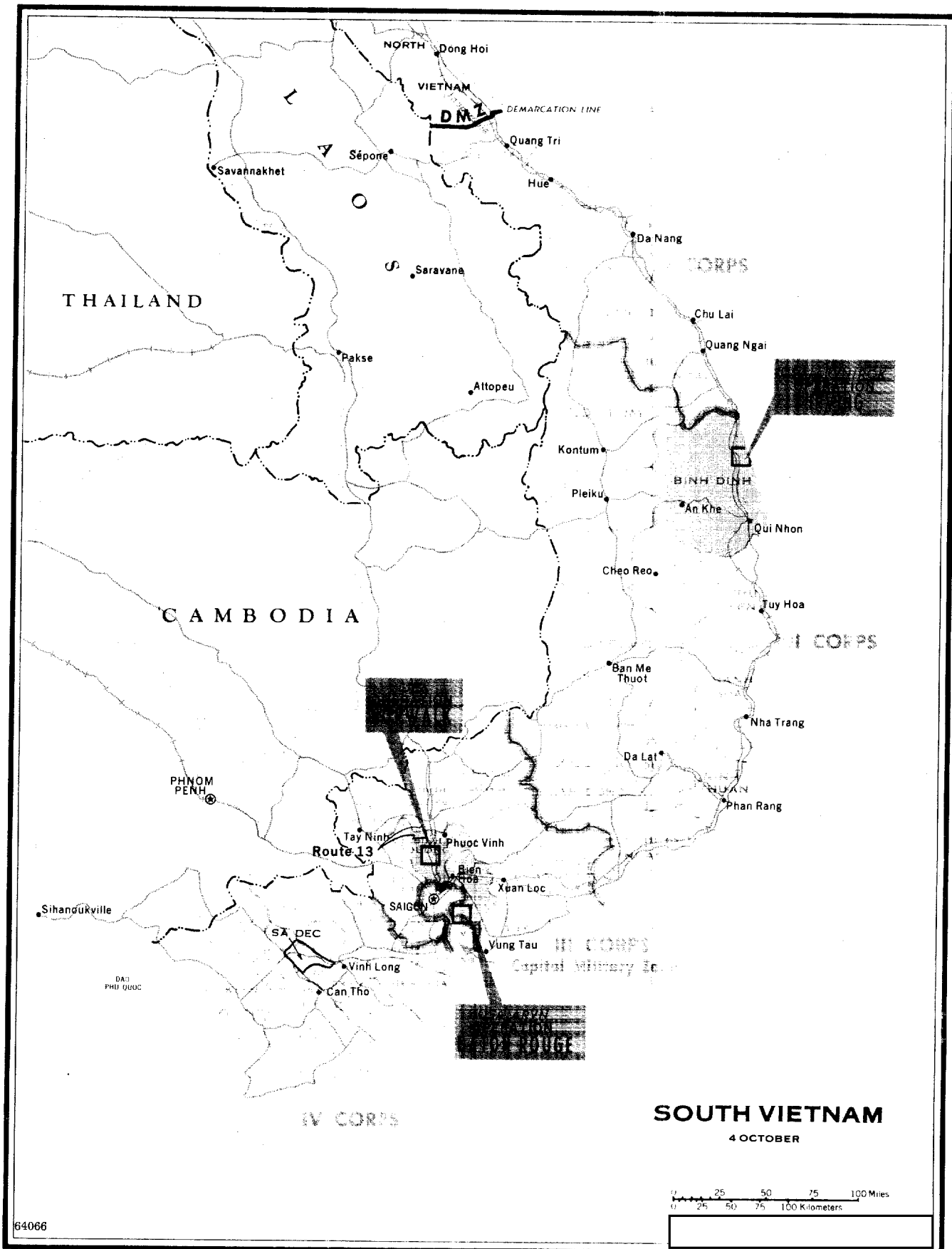
V. Communist Political Developments: A Bulgarian party and government delegation

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will leave for Hanoi in a few days (Paras. 1-2). Hanoi has apparently re-emphasized that there has been no change in the Liberation Front's basic position on a negotiated settlement (Paras. 3).

VI. Other Major Aspects: Another example of North Vietnamese attempts to thwart US air strikes is given (Para. 1).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. American, South Vietnamese, and South Korean forces participating in Operation IRVING attempted on 4 October to trap a battered North Vietnamese - Viet Cong force in coastal Binh Dinh Province. The Communists were forced into the flat coastal land in a two-day running battle with units of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division and South Korea's Capital Division. Helicopter-borne American units were able to block escape routes and funnel the fleeing Communists to the sea through jungled mountain valleys. South Vietnamese troops then moved up from the south to complete the encirclement. Patrol boats and armed junks stood by to cut off any possible retreat via the South China Sea.

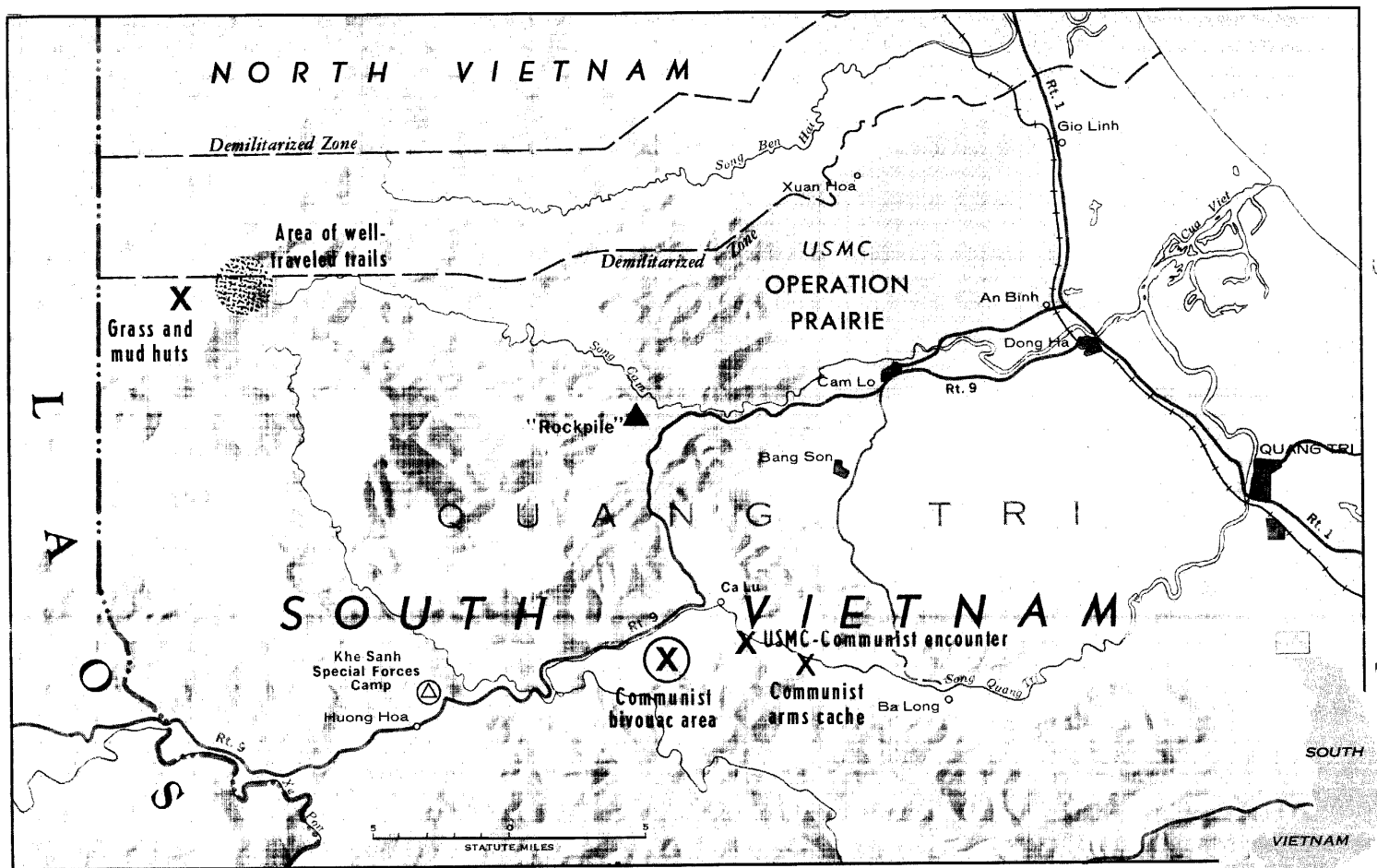
2. The American forces killed a total of 326 enemy soldiers and also claimed an unusually high number of enemy prisoners--131 captured and 255 suspects detained. This is a ratio of about 2.5 killed to 1 captured. The previous ratio has been eight enemy dead for every one captured.

3. A South Vietnamese gunboat was mined and sunk the morning of 4 October in the Dan Xay River, about 20 miles southeast of Saigon. All three South Vietnamese crew members were killed in the incident. The boat was escorting infantry units engaged in Operation BATON ROUGE presently being conducted in Bien Hoa Province.

4. Two battalions of the US 1st Infantry Division began a road-clearing operation north of Saigon early on 4 October. This operation, named NORWALK, will be conducted along Route 13 in Binh Duong Province. No contact with enemy units has been reported. Previous American operations have been successfully conducted along this road by using a decoy convoy, which when attacked is immediately reinforced by helilifted forces.

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The Viet Cong Threat in III and IV Corps

5. According to several senior South Vietnamese Army officers, the South Vietnamese IV Corps area will be chosen by the Viet Cong, rather than the III Corps area, for an all-out attempt at scoring a major military victory.

6. Because allied surveillance and military sweeps are proving so effective in the III Corps area, the Viet Cong allegedly could not concentrate more than one regiment without allied forces being aware of the activity and moving in to halt the concentration.

7. Although the Viet Cong military situation in South Vietnam's IV Corps is presently disrupted by floods, such factors as the lack of US forces, the good Viet Cong supply capabilities, and the relatively slow allied reaction capability would seem to make the IV Corps area a possible area for major Viet Cong activity in the next few months.

Communist Infiltration Continues Through Quang Tri Province

8. Communist forces are apparently using western Quang Tri Province as an infiltration route in an effort to skirt allied positions and US troops participating in Operation PRAIRIE.

9. Allied reconnaissance elements have recently detected Communist activities in the western part of the DMZ and in areas to the west and south of Operation PRAIRIE. In late September, numerous grass and mud huts and three new, well-constructed houses were located just south of the DMZ near the Laos border. An extensive complex of well-traveled trails--two to three feet wide--have also been located in the same area.

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10. The Kha Sanh Special Forces Camp, from which the movement of enemy forces in the western area of Quang Tri Province is monitored, has reported that a CIDG patrol recently observed a 500-man Communist force crossing the Quang Tri River southeast of Ca Lu. This force then moved to a large bivouac area approximately four miles southwest of Ca Lu.

11. A US Marine reconnaissance team located a cache of 120 rounds of 81-mm. mortar ammunition on 2 October in an area near where they encountered a small enemy force several days earlier.

12. Although the size and identity of these forces remains unknown, this activity strongly suggests western Quang Tri Province is being used as a major infiltration route in lieu of the more accessible areas now being swept by Operation PRAIRIE.

#### Mission of Communist Forces in Quang Tri Province

13. Several enemy documents recently captured by US Marine forces in Quang Tri Province provide some insight into the mission of North Vietnamese units in northernmost South Vietnam. The documents give the general impression that the 324th NVA Division has a more or less static mission of defending its base areas between the DMZ and Route 9.

14. One of the documents, captured on 20 July suggests that the mission of the 324th Division was to prepare that area of Quang Tri Province between the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and Route 9 as a defensive stronghold. This document, for example, instructed cadres and soldiers to "consolidate fortifications, perfect camouflage and seize opportunities to lure enemy forces out of positions in order to attack."

15. A second document dated 8 July stresses the necessity for Communist forces--presumably in northern Quang Tri Province--to coordinate their activities with comrades fighting on other battlefields so as to force the enemy to cope with them under conditions favorable to the Communists. It would be a mistake, according to the document, for Communist forces to wait until their own base areas were

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consolidated before they acted. The document also intimated that a large body of as yet uncommitted North Vietnamese forces had secretly moved into the area and that this had greatly encouraged other soldiers to "break through the US defensive line on Route 9, develop liberated areas and corridors, and threaten rear areas." The general NVA plan was to continuously attack and encircle enemy forces to facilitate their annihilation outside of their fortifications. Special attention was to be paid to preserving the secrecy of the number of troops who were in the theater as well as to the antiaircraft mission.

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III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. A Bulgarian party and government delegation led by politburo member, Deputy Premier, and General of the Army Ivan Mikhaylov will leave in the next few days on a formal visit to North Vietnam.

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2. Mikhaylov, who is 69 years old, is generally thought to be one of the more conservative, pro-Soviet members of the Bulgarian party hierarchy. His responsibilities within the politburo are not known, but in view of his past experience in the army and as minister of defense it is reasonable to assume he is in charge of military organizational matters. Neither the exact mission nor the composition of the Bulgarian delegation is known, but the Bulgarians only last month signed a new economic aid agreement with DRV politburo member Le Thanh Nghi in Sofia.

Hanoi Emphasizes No Change in Front's Position on Negotiations

3. Hanoi broadcast a commentary on 4 October which appeared to be designed to emphasize that there had been no change in the Front's basic position on a negotiated settlement. The broadcast was taken from a Vietnam Courier article of 19 September and it highlighted the importance of US troop withdrawal in any settlement. The author claimed, for example, that although the Front was willing to participate in a postwar coalition government, the essential condition for the formation of such a government was withdrawal of US troops. The article closed with the language and phrasing of the Front's original pronouncement of its five-point position: "All negotiations with US imperialists at this moment are entirely useless if they still refuse to withdraw from South Vietnam all their troops,...and if the NFLSV, the only genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people does not have its decisive voice."

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. A good example of North Vietnamese attempts to counter US air strikes was contained in an intercepted message of 1 October.

2. The message, from an engineering construction bureau suggested to a subordinate unit that it construct a false suspension bridge and its approaches a distance from the true bridge in order that "the enemy will be misled." The same unit was told to camouflage parts of two other bridges immediately after their completion.

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